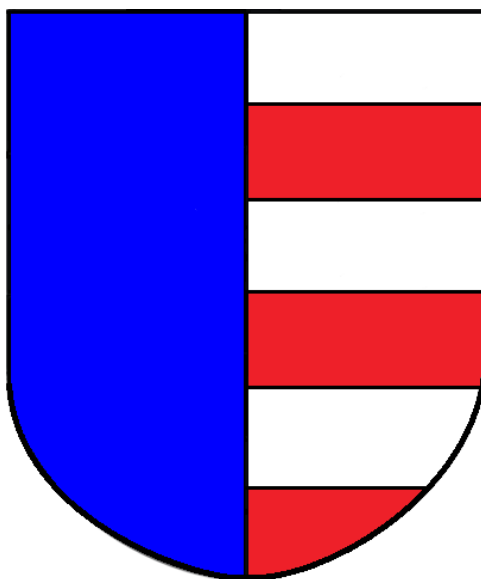




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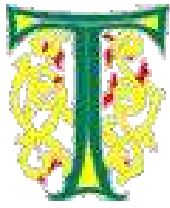
# Radu I of Wallachia

**Deciphering a mysterious coat of arms from  
the Universal Armorial of herald Gelre**



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he Universal Armorial of herald Gelre was created starting with year 1370 by Flemish chronicler Claes Heynenszoon. His alias was Gelre while serving as herald in the service of Duke William I of Guelders, who was a relentless traveller and a stern supporter of the Teutonic Order. Gelre managed to leave in posterity one of the most important medieval roll of arms, meticulously painting on 121 sheets of parchment no less than 1755 coats of arms from across Europe, focusing on the area he knew best: Netherlands-Rhineland. For the eastern side of the continent, it is very likely that he benefited of information provided by knights fighting alongside the Order in Oriental Prussia against Lithuanian. When returned, they reported to Duke William, as perhaps the knight-errant Daniel of Merwede, who made no less than five expeditions with the Teutonic knights. During the first (1359) he visited Constantinople and Bulgaria, and in the fourth (winter 1365-66) he travelled through Wallachia, Hungary and Poland.<sup>1</sup> As consequence, it's very likely that Gelre painted parts of his armorial, and perhaps the entire chapter dedicated to Hungary, in connection with one of the several anti-Lithuanian Crusades carried in joint venture with the Teutonic Order. We will use this important idea later on in this paper.

Silent witness to politic and military events within Duchy of Guelders and abroad, it is certain that Heynenszoon received updated information in a greater extent than his fellow heralds. However, we see in his armorial how for the most of Eastern Europe's coats of arms, names of individuals and fiefs are written in a fanciful manner, with many mistakes. This makes us believe that the initial data have been degraded by transmission from one person to another, each having different nationality and different degrees of education. Moreover, Flemish translation worsened things further. Even when Gelre procured the heraldic information himself, for example in England, where he accompanied his patron for investiture as Knight of the Garter, phonetics created him some difficulties. Since the nineteenth century, three different scholars<sup>2</sup> tried to put order in the Gelre armorial, identifying coat of arms, names, fiefdoms and territories. Using the main edition of Paul Adam-Even (1971), we will discuss several coats of arms from our area of interest.

<sup>1</sup> Werner Paravicini, *Die Preussenreisen des Europäischen Adels*, Teil 1, Jan Thorbecke Verlag Sigmaringen, 1989, pg. 52. Contribution of Daniel de la Merwede was celebrated by herald in the fourth chapter of the Armorial ("Praise for brave knights"), where are depicted eight coat of arms, the fourth belonging to knight Daniel (site [wappenwiki.org/index.php/Gelre\\_Armorial\\_Folio\\_14](http://wappenwiki.org/index.php/Gelre_Armorial_Folio_14)). Paravicini states that Gelre himself "travel between 1362 and 1387 at least five times to Prussia" (Idem, pg. 139).

<sup>2</sup> V. Bouton (Paris/Brussels, 1881-1905), K. Regel (Netherlands, 1885), P. Adam-Even (Neuchatel, Paul Attinger, 1971).

From file 52 (verso) to file 55 (front), counting from no. 500 to 547, we find the arms of the king of Hungary and his vassals. Between years 1370 and 1382 Hungary and Poland were part of a personal union under the sceptre of Louis I the Great, so it's no surprise to find listed here Polish knights. On file 52 is drawn the coat of arms of king Louis (marshalled Anjou-Hungary, Poland, Arpad-Hungary, and Croatia) followed by his main vassals. Browsing the list we will try to set also the hypothetical time frame when the herald painted the coats of arms in this chapter. Top eight emblems belong to some well known armigers, dukes from Central-North Europe. None of these blazons need discussion, as they are undisputed. The only problem consists in some really questionable links between the noted armigers and king Louis as their overlord (below: *file 52 verso in the Universal Armorial of herald Gelre*).





First (no. 501) are placed the arms of one duke of Masovia (at Gelre: *H'toge van d' Masovia*). This duchy was placed in the mid-northern region of Poland and in the thirteenth century had a history of its own. In the eyes of Claes Heynenszoon, the ruler of Masovia and member of Hungarian-Polish establishment was one of three different people: Siemovit III, member of the House of Piast, Masovian branch, was Polish vassal between 1351-70, and independent after king Casimir III's death. He never formally submitted to king Louis until his death (1381). However, our Flemish herald definitely was aware that around 1373-74, Siemovit's two sons, Janusz and Siemovit IV the Younger, started as co-rulers in given parts of Masovia: the former in Warsaw and the latter in Rawa. In traditional Polish heraldic style, both brothers shared the coat of arms of House Piast: *gules, eagle displayed silver*. Duke Janusz became one of the king Louis' friends and faithful since year 1373, when he **pledged allegiance** for his part of dukedom. Siemovit IV strongly opposed Angevin intercession in Poland, and reluctantly became Louis' personal vassal only for a very short interval, between the deaths of his father and the king's (1381-82). From this complicated situation, Adam-Even choose to attribute the Masovian coat of arms to Siemovit IV, the adversary of king Louis, instead of much friendlier Janusz.

Next on page we find the arms of the dukes of Brieg/Brzeg (no. 502, *Hrt' v'n Brige*). Louis I of Brieg was a Piast from the Silesian branch, a long-lived and capable administrator of his dukedom between 1358-98. He was a nominal vassal of the Luxemburg's from Bohemia, and is no proof, except his Polish descent and the joint participation in 1372 to the anti-Lithuanian crusade, of any feudal connection with Louis of Anjou. Gelre clearly placed his coat of arms in this chapter due to this conjecture. In addition, let's note the European stature of the Silesian duke, who was called by his contemporaries both "the Righteous" and "the Shrewd".

Further we see the arms of the duke of Munsterberg (no. 503, *Hrt' v' Munsterberch*). Bolko III of Munsterberg/Ziębice (1358-1410), ruled over a small dukedom in the North of Lower Silesia. He sold gradually most of his possessions and didn't have direct links with Hungary. His presence in the armorial in the chapter dedicated to Hungary and Poland is probably due to his membership to the Silesian Piasts, like some of his other cousins (i.e. Konrad of Oels or Rupprecht of Leignitz).

Duke Vladislav II of Opeln/Opole (no. 504, *Hrt' v' Rusen en v'n Napel*) started as vassal of Bohemia for the inherited dukedom of Opole, but his entire political life was closely linked with Louis of Anjou. He was raised and educated at the Hungarian Court, becoming an effective **count palatine** in Buda (1366-72), then governor of Halych-Volhynia (also *Ruthenia* or *Rus*, 1372-78, therefore the appellation used by Heinenszoon), count palatine of Poland and later governor of Kujavia.

Konrad II the Grey of Oels/Oleśnica (no. 505, *Hrt' vn'd Ulzen*) was along Bolko III of Munsterberg/Ziębice an unimportant member of Silesian House of Piast and, as the former, not linked politically to the king Louis of Anjou.

Schweidnitz/Świdnica (no. 506, *Hrt' van de Zwiednits*) was a Silesian dukedom ruled in time of Gelre Armorial compilation by Anna von Habsburg, widow of the last independent Piast ruler, Bolko II the Small (d. 1368). Maybe his **alliance** from 1345 with Louis of Hungary and Cazimir of Poland was materialized by a form of allegiance, as it was the medieval custom, so is natural for having his coat of arms alongside the Hungarian-Polish king.

Next is depicted (no. 507, *Troppau*) the coat of arms of duke John I of Troppau-Ratibor/Opava-Racibórz, scion of the bastard line of Bohemian Premislid House, who co-ruled his dukedom between 1367-77 with his half-brothers Nicholas III, Wenceslas and Přemysl. They were part of Bohemia's feudal establishment and they had no political ties with Hungary-Poland.

Rupprecht I of Liegnitz/Legnica (no. 508, *Hrt' v Liegenits*), nephew of Louis I of Brieg, was a Silesian Piast who ruled his dukedom in the time frame 1373-1409, having as co-ruler his brother Wenceslas II. His political interests covered only the intestine struggles within Silesia and equally had no ties with Louis of Anjou.

Thomas of Saint Georgen (no.509, *Grave v. Sunte Jorien*) was a Hungarian noble issued from a Northern branch of Hont-Pázmány clan. His family domains were circumscribed to three castles, St. George/Svätý Jur, Bösing/Pezinok and Eberhard/Malinovo, situated North of Bratislava. His father Peter was the first mentioned with the title of **count**, when holding the office in Bereg County (1360). Thomas was raised at the Angevin Court together with his brother Peter the Younger and both were mentioned in 1363 as king Louis' *familiars*. In king's service, count Thomas was diplomat, toll administrator, and between 1375-78 castellan of Holič. Next he was appointed master

of treasury (1378-82) and count of Nitra (mentioned in 1382). After Louis' death, he reached his carrier's peak as Ban of Croatia (1384-85) in the turbulent years of struggle for the Hungarian throne's succession.

Armorial's folio 52 ends with two empty shields. Maybe Gelre anticipated painting further coat of arms for other unmentioned Silesian duchies, i.e. Teschen and Breslau.

On folio 53 (front) are only five coat of arms. Plain logic says that here will follow the rest of Hungary's main allies and vassals, other than Silesian dukes. Let's see if so the case is. First is painted the blazon attributed to Bartosz Wezenborg (*Baris v. Desenberch*). He was one of the staunch supporters of the Angevin personal union between Hungary and Poland. For his loyalty, he was appointed **governor** of Kujavia (sometimes after 1372, until 1377). Meanwhile, he was renowned for personal, long-lasting feud against the Teutonic knights marauding the Polish countryside. This attitude brought him shortly Western Europe's wrath and king Louis' disgrace. The proposed arms – *black bull passant on golden shield*, differs slightly from Wezenborg true ones according to Józef Szymański: *black bull passant guardant*<sup>3</sup>.

Apparently the list of high-ranked vassals and associates is over and now, along with Bartosz, starts the group of Polish nobles. But it is not the case. Of the rest of 38 emblems, only 20 belong to Szlachta families, as identified by Alfred Znamierowski in his "Herbarz Rodowy" ("Noble families' armorial"). And not in ordered succession. We would expect the others to be Hungarian, Slovak, Croat, etc. It doesn't happen. On next pages, (folio 53 verso, 54 front) come down surprisingly some German knights, four of them certainly from Saxony: Otto von Zeschau (no. 515), Bernhard von Zedlitz (no. 516), Magnus von Loeben (no. 521) and Bernhard von Wiltberg (no. 539). Another, Otto von Sliven (no. 524), is a knight from Brandenburg. They could be Hungarian vassals only by personal allegiance to king Louis the Great, without involving their homelands. Or is more than that?

Werner Paravicini started to clarify the situation by comparing armorials Bellenville, Gelre and the Roll of Lithuanian Crusade from 1385 (*Ehrentisch-verzeichnis*), observing the high number of identical shields<sup>4</sup>. Along with the

<sup>3</sup> Józef Szymański, *Herbarz średniowiecznego rycerstwa polskiego (Armorial of the Polish medieval knights)*, Warsaw, 1993. pg. 15. on web.archive.org/web/20040407115241/http://akromer.republika.pl:80/herbarz\_bellenville.html.

<sup>4</sup> W. Paravicini, *Die Preußenreisen des Europäischen Adels*, Teil 1, (Beihefte der Francia, 17/1), Sigmaringen (Thorbecke) 1989, ISBN 3-7995-7317-8.

alluring hypothesis of Claes Heinenszoon personal participation in anti-Lithuanian crusades, it is credible to link the Hungarian-Polish chapter of the armorial to these military events. And comparing the dates when the majority of the listed armigers were both contemporaries and in connection with Louis of Anjou, the most plausible Prussian campaign is the one from year 1372.

Bartosz' crest is followed by one which Gelre attributes to *Her Uulric Zwaert* (*zwart* = *black, dark*). Bershammar Armorial clarifies things identifying for this shield one bearer named Ulrich Schoof (alias Schaffosch). The noble stem Schaf/Scof was a Lower Silesian family of German (Frankish) descent, with land owned North of Sudetes Mountains, in Alt Kemnitz/Stara Kamienica<sup>5</sup>. History recorded Gotsche (Gotthard?) Schaf around year 1381 as vassal of Schweidnitz for his Burg Kynast/Cojnik. Schaf blazon was *paly of eight, argent and gules*. The one Schaf mentioned by Gelre, Ulrich the Black, was holding at the time the nearby castle of Kinsberg/Ciechanowice, also as Schweidnitz' vassal. He was probably involved in one of the Hungarian-Polish crusading campaigns, based on the old alliance treaty from 1345.

Next shield, no. 512 is described by Gelre as *Her Staeffen v. d. Wekere*). The armiger was identified by Adam-Even as an anonym carrier of the Polish herb Olobok (Holobok), counting on Gelre to continue the display in logical order of other Polish knights. But as we saw, it's not the case, even with the one before, Ulrich Schaf. In addition, the Holoboks and their plethora of Polish-Ruthenian in-laws sharing the same *herb* were not the only European bearers of *gules, a fish (salmon) silver head coupéd bendy*. For example, the same arms in the Swiss "Züricher Roll" belong to Swabian Aeschach House from Lindau (no. 353).

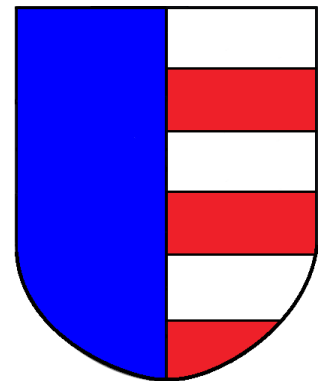
As already shown, beginning with folio 53 it is useless to further track a geographical systematization for this chapter. Maybe we should look closer to the text and rely more on translating and interpreting the Middle Flemish *Staeffen v. d. Wekere*. Apart from *Steffen*, who clearly is the Christian name Stephen, *wekere* is not a fief name, but a surname with two variants: *weker/*

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<sup>5</sup> Paravicini and Clemmensen identified this coat of arms as belonging to stem Schaffgotsch alias Schoff from Lower Silesia. Ghyczy Pál added in his work, *Gelre herold czimerkönyve (The Armorial of herald Gelre)*, 1904, that Ulrich was member of one Schaffgotsch branch named Dallwitz. Wikisource states in article *Schaffgotsch, das Grafengeschlecht, Genealogie* that Ulrich was mentioned in year 1369 as Burggraf of Kinsberg/Hrozňatov. Due to name Ulrich and the chronic absence of Hungary's main vassals from the South, in my work *Basarab House of Wallachia. Heraldic and genealogical study*, 2016, [www.academia.edu](http://www.academia.edu), I considered this coat of arms a misrepresentation to one of the most important vassals of king Louis of Anjou, the count of Celje/Cilly. I was utterly wrong and I make here the necessary amends.

*waker* = *night vigil*<sup>6</sup>, or *weken* = *soft, weak*<sup>7</sup>. Accordingly, the owner of the shield may well be the count Stephen II Lackfi (1367-1397), Ban of Croatia (1372-74) and voivode of Transylvania (1373-76), known protégé and favourite of king Louis the Great. Other option is the last Tsar of Serbia, Stephen Uroš V Nemanjić (1355-1371), known also as Nejak (the Weak), due to his glaring kindness and diffidence, unusual in those brutal, bellicose times. He was also a reluctant vassal of Louis the Great since the 1350's. The problem consists in the difficulty to tie any of those two medieval leaders with the *salmon silver head coupé* depicted by Gelre with its respective crest: *golden crown, a moor's head sable crowned with golden wing on a twist of pearls*. It's true, both of them had red shields with argent charges, but with totally different heraldic beasts: Lackfi – a flying dragon, Uroš – a double-headed eagle.

In this mixed succession of high nobles, petty vassals and regional neighbours, the next coat of arms (no. 513) is of particular interest, because in my opinion it could describe **for the first time in a Western armorial the personal coat of arms of a voivode of Wallachia**. It is blazoned *azure dimidiated by barry of six, argent and gules* (see beside). The crest shows *a fish sable supporting a semi-circular plume of the same issuing from a golden crown, lambrequins of ermines (counter-ermine)*.



The armiger, noted by Heinenszoon as *Her Raeskin v. Scoonavaer*, was identified by Adam-Even as *Raczek Wloskowic* of Moravia. But I don't think that is necessarily true. Moravia was led by the House of Luxembourg, who ruled the wealthy and peaceful Bohemian kingdom, which is having two separate chapters in the armorial, on files 33 and 68-69. Its wise king Charles IV didn't support the Prussian crusades, nor uphold his subjects to participate.

The same marshalled arms from no. 513 are found within the Burgundian *Bershammar Roll*, largely using Gelre as inspiration, but there they are attributed to *Raczek de Vleskovic*, alias *Derslawiz*.<sup>8</sup> At Gelre, the Middle Flemish name *Scoonavaer* is in fact a rebus. It is based on theme

<sup>6</sup> According to the historical-etymological dictionary De Geïntegreerde Taal-Bank (GTB) – Historische woordenboeken op internet – Instituut voor de Nederlandse taal, on site [gtb.inl.nl](http://gtb.inl.nl)

<sup>7</sup> According to <http://www.etymologiebank.nl/trefwoord/weken>, word from Middle Flemish.

<sup>8</sup> See [http://wappenwiki.org/index.php/Bershammar\\_Armorial\\_Folio\\_214](http://wappenwiki.org/index.php/Bershammar_Armorial_Folio_214).



scoon, who refers to *cleanliness*, *beauty*, or, metaphorically, to *glory* or even *in-laws*. *Aver* meant around 1200's<sup>9</sup> *scion*, *descendant*. Together, we read *glorious scion*. If we consider the variant *vader* instead of *vaer* we have directly *father in law* (formed just like the French beau-père). Anyway, the possible results seem to be rather a surname linked to some noble connection, and not an indication of fiefdom, as we saw previously at no. 512.<sup>10</sup> Instead, *Wloskowic/Vleskovic* is obviously stating ethnicity as *włosko* in Polish means *Italian* (by extension latinophone), in Slovakian means *mountains* and in Czech translates directly as *Wallachia*. Together with the belonging suffix *-ovič*, the name considered by Adam-Even turns in ethnonym: *the Wallachian* or *the Mountaineer*.

The editor identified Raeskin with an unknown knight from Moravia. This solution must have been suggested by the existence of the Valašsko/Wallachia region in Southern Moravia and the further presence at no. 517 of a coat of arms belonging to a knight of certain Moravian extraction (Zlín area), John of Mezerice/Valašské Meziříčí<sup>11</sup>. The weakness of his theory consists of the minor political relevance of the Vlach region in Moravian fourteenth century, not to mention the absence of any formal leader with knightly stature amid this population of transhumant shepherds. Instead, in the last quarter of the fourteenth century Wallachia – the Carpathian state – was nominally under Hungarian suzerainty, a good reason for placing its ruler at the end of what it would be in any case a Hungary-Poland great vassal's list.

As for explaining *Derslawiz* in Bergshammar Armorial, we can think of German *der Slawisch* (*the Slavonian*), individual belonging to the Orthodox Rite who used the Slavonic tongue in church service. This was true at that time in Serbia, Bulgaria, Wallachia and Moldavia. In conclusion, we can translate the whole as *Radu of Wallachia, the Schismatic* (from Catholic perspective). If the armiger in question would have arise from an old German colonization in Moravia, as Adam-Eden presumed, he could not be described by Bergshammar as *Slawisch*. In the time frame when the armorial was

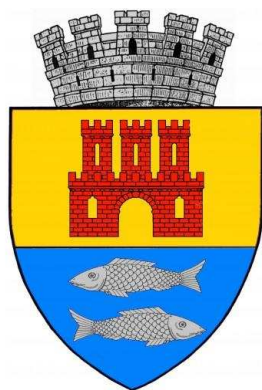
<sup>9</sup> See <http://www.etymologiebank.nl/trefwoord/aver>.

<sup>10</sup> *The Honorary Table Panel (Erhentischtafel)*, armorial from Oriental Prussia occasioned by the military campaign from 1385, indicates one *Racz von Schonanger* who, according to Werner Paravicini (op. cit., page 141), could be the same with Raeskin van Scoonavaer. Schönanger is the old name of today's village Orlów (Borowa) in Poland. Let's mention that according to site *Germans from Russia Heritage Society*, <http://www.grhs.org/vr/vc-other.htm>, this German colony was founded only in 1783.

<sup>11</sup> Adam-Even, backed by Paravicini (op. cit., page 141), placed as Moravian the coat of arms attributed in Belleville Armorial (folio 61r, no. 9) to Jan van Valezau (uncertain localization), *a sun gules on silver* (at Gelre, no. 533, *golden*) shield.

compiled, voivode was Radu I from the Princely House of Basarab. The distorted Raeskin derived from his name, as that Bershammar's Raczek is in fact Radek/Radu.

One more indication that Heinenszoon knew precisely which historical character wanted to describe as Raeskin v. Scoonavaer is shown in the crest. The fish is the emblem of Făgăraș dukedom, region from which originates Radu's family, the House of Basarab. The earliest heraldic symbol of Făgăraș preserved to date is a very frail seal dated 1413 and sheltered by the Hungarian archives showing *two fish superposed on a plain field*.



*The coat of arms of the city of Făgăraș*

It is hard to determine the exact moment when the information regarding this name and the respective coat of arms would have reached Gelre. The heraldic information might be provided by knights who opposed Radu in 1377 and 1382, if not recorded personally by the herald during his Oriental trips.

According to Romanian historiography, Radu I succeeded his brother, Vladislav I Vlaicu. Lack of descendants of the latter made the former ruler of Wallachia sometimes around 1374-77. Radu was born from the marriage of voivode Nicholas Alexander with lady Mary Lackfi, descendant of the family who produced several voivodes of Transylvania and bans of Croatia, including Stephen II Lackfi mentioned before.

Radu's life as *successor apparent* could take, according to the mores of the time, several directions: plotting to overthrow the regnant prince, becoming a monk as proof his lack of political ambitions, staying in his relative's service or turning to a knight-errant in search of his own Grail. Lacking historical data, we don't know what choice the young Radu made, but most likely he remained at home. The best evidence of him being a loyal subject is the very reign of Vladislav Vlaicu, full of difficult moments externally, but

smoothly carried out internally. Radu could anytime become the leader of a pro-Catholic political faction, close to Hungary. If he ever acted outside the established framework, we would have heard from Hungarian historical sources, but they remain silent. This fraternal loyalty, rather unusual in that time of personal ambition, suggests even a temporary absence from public life, maybe secluded in a monastery. An argument would be the strange name *Godon* attributed to the Wallachian prince in year 1377 by a Hungarian text, a name consonant with the monastic Gideon. On the other hand, to write by mistake “Godon” instead of “Rodon”, name similar phonetically in Hungarian with *Radan*, is would be easy for a chancellery scribe. Radan(us) was the name Radu was known for by the Venetian diplomacy.

Whatever the case, his dynastic loyalty was rewarded sometime around 1372, when Vlaicu associated him as co-ruler, ensuring the throne succession in absence of direct descendants from his marriage with lady Ana. 1374 is the last year when we have documentary proof that Vladislav Vlaicu was alive. The change of reign took place without any commotion and Radu showed from the beginning that he was a deserving successor.

Radu I was consistent to claim his praised ancestry through coinage, using the Basarab coat of arms, *barry of eight dimidiated by plain field*<sup>12</sup>, on both versions of *deniers* preserved from him. *Type I* introduces a good number of heraldic charges in the shield’s senester field. The most frequent symbol is the monogram **Θ**. Other logos are the fleur-de-lys, a two-petal flower shaped as Greek? *Iota* (erroneous fleur-de-lys?), and a bow without arrow shaped like a **D** (clumsy representation of **Θ**?).



*Radu I deniers (type I). Only the first version appears on Slavonic legend' coins, the rest only on issues with Latin legend*

<sup>12</sup> Discussion of the true colors of the Basarab coat of arms is made in Tiberiu Fratila-Felmer, *Basarab House of Wallachia. Heraldic and genealogical study*, [www.academia.edu/30095489](http://www.academia.edu/30095489).

All these less used charges are placed on the obverse of coin issues bearing Latin legend. This interesting exclusivity should have significance in itself, linked maybe to the circulation area of coins. Not even in this particular case we don't think that logos are in fact mint marks. They are all heraldic symbols related to certain political moments from which we did not received information. Genealogist Octavian Lecca observed over a century ago the widespread custom of Romanian noble family members to alter, sometimes radically, their inherited coat of arms, "*even from father to son*"<sup>13</sup>. Given that in the medieval world the arms talk about the armigers who actually bear them, cadency was justified by need for individualization, by biographical stages covered, or, as the predecessor of prince Radu I have done, by historical moments deserving to be remembered. From there to engraving them as comprehensible rebuses on the material with the widest circulation in the country – the currency – was only one step.

We suspect that the result of such biographical developments must have been Radu I issue of deniers *type II (with knight)*, with a Western-style design never encountered before in Wallachian mints. On the obverse is engraved for the first time the complete Basarab achievements of arms, blazoned shield, helmet and crest, a correct composition in terms of heraldic proportions. The issuer appears on the reverse standing in suit of armor, lance in his right hand and Basarab shield in his left. The arms on the obverse, Latin legend reading on both sides † MONETA RADOWI TRANSALPINI and the slender figure on the reverse are details that show the appearance in the Wallachia's mint of a master engraver who could comply with the blazoning rules of Western chivalry. But he could mostly mirror the voivode's desire to be perceived in a certain way, in a well defined moment of his political career, and to invest in this image.



*Denier type II Radu I (with knight), Latin legend*

<sup>13</sup> Octav-George Lecca, *Familiile boerești române. Istoric și genealogie (Romanian boyar's families. History and genealogy)*, Publishing House. Minerva, Bucharest 1899, p. XLIII.



This breath of west-European air in a country committed to Balkan-Byzantine ties is consistent with one of the very few historical data we have about Radu I, briefly noted in the „Cronaca Carrarese” of Gatari brothers<sup>14</sup>:

*„(MCCCLXXVII) It was therefore in Hungary a great battle between the Holy majesty king Louis and Radan, prince of Bulgaria, the non-believer; that is they were forty thousand men on each side and it was a great killing of non-believers and Christians, but more of non-believers; and it was close for the king to be defeated, because the Signoria had given to non-believers ten thousand horses’ armors, and the ten thousand armed like this charged towards the king Louis’ person and were close to capture him; but God’s help was felt there and handed power and victory to king Louis, so non-believers were scattered and many were killed and captured; about this victory the king of Hungary wrote to the lord of Padua, being certain that any of his victory will rejoice him”* (our translation from Italian).

The text informs us that in 1377 king Louis the Great carried out a military expedition to Wallachia to subdue Radan the non-believer. It’s not surprising to see the name of Radu styled as prince of Bulgaria. Perhaps he retained the control over Badin, former Hungarian Banat of Bulgaria, control established *de facto* under his brother’s rule. In that year, king Louis was absorbed by an anti-Lithuanian crusade in Galicia and Lodomeria, but took advantage of the large number of western knights gathered under his Christian flag to resolve some personal issues with the unruly neighbor. In order to have justification for using military resources approved by the Pope for the anti-Lithuanian crusade against fellow Christian Wallachians, he duly depicted Radu in his propagandistic reports as a *non-believer*.

However, Radu was well prepared for the eventuality of attack, buying Venetian weapons and armors for 10.000 horses, a possible exaggeration that does not diminish the voivode’s merit of thinking, order, and pay for a heavy cavalry unit as strategic shock force. The purchasing cost must have been

<sup>14</sup> L. A. Muratori, Giosue Carducci, Vittorio Fiorini, *Rerum italicarum scriptores: raccolta degli storici italiani dal cinquecento al millecinquecento*, vol. XVII, pg. 145 (text from *Cronaca Carrarese* by Gatari brothers), digitized by Internet Archive, 2011.

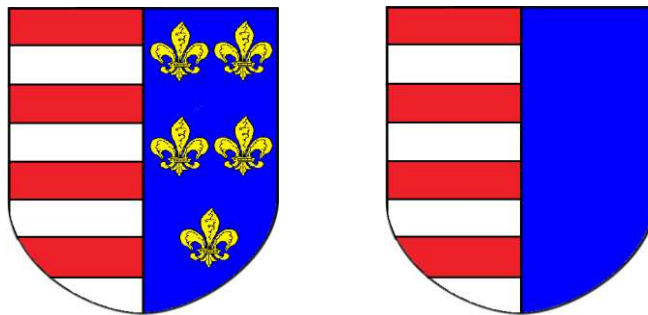
enormous, comparable nowadays with the equipment of a regiment of tanks, but at least timing was good. First, Radu took advantage of a moment when Venice was in good relations with Wallachia's Byzantine ally and in bad ones with the Hungarian foe. Then he had diplomatic resources to enter into negotiations with Signoria, maybe through his Bosnian relatives, and, most of all, he had in treasury the needed silver. According to the chronicler, the charge of Wallachian heavy cavalry, excellently equipped in the most western style, had been close to capture the Angevin king himself. Although the result of the battle has been praised as favorable to Hungarians, the campaign's goals had not been reached at all. In the letter sent to his ally from Padua, letter advertised and copied in *Cronaca* by Gatari, king Louis enumerate that year's successes of the Lodomerian crusade, being surprisingly but eloquently silent of what happened in Wallachia. More than that, for finally obtaining some political results there, five years later king Louis was forced to split again his Western crusaders, targeting a large army towards Radu's country. King's bellicose persistence made the latter to negotiate, and considering the issue of deniers with Angevin lily and the mention of Raeskin v. Scoonavaer/Racz von Schonanger (Paravicini's identification) amid the participants in the 1385's Prussian crusade, it's very possible that the voivode swore a formal allegiance towards Hungary in 1382, the last year of king Louis' life.

But why would Gelre assign to Radu the Wallachian a coat of arms so similar to the Angevin king? For answering this very good question we should consider closer the military events from 1377 and 1382. Echoes of the epic clenching between crusaders and Wallachian iron-clad cavalry may have reached the heralds Gelre and Bershammar, hence the presence in armorials, bottom of the list of great kingdom's vassals, of that mysterious *Her Raeskin Scoonavaer* alias *Raczek de Vleskovic Derlawiz* with his coat of arms *azure* dimidiated by *argent-gules* stripes. This emblem must be noted by some Polish or Czech opponents fighting on crusaders side, and passed over later to Heynenszoon. The heraldic insignia would be visible from afar, most certainly being a battle-flag. A Hungarian banner proudly waved in battle by Romanian foes? Peculiar indeed. For explaining this, we should go back in time for half a century.

In 1330 king Charles Robert, first Angevin king of Hungary, invaded Wallachia in order to reassert suzerainty over the land ruled by a much too

independent voivode, Basarab I (1315-1352). After a campaign which seemed more like a promenade in a deserted territory, he was finally ambushed in a mountainous region and severely defeated in what is called today the Battle of Posada (9-12 November). During the four-day slaughter, king Charles Robert saved his life by changing outfit with one of his retainers. This one was killed, and the Romanians were taking possession of an excellent trophy: the king's blazoned war equipment. Information about this painful loss is offered by *Chronicum pictum Vindobonenses* (Illuminated Chronicle of Vienna) (c.1360)<sup>15</sup>.

Being aware of the symbolic importance of such action, especially for a warlike and arrogant knight as the king was, it's likely that Basarab displayed since then the blazoned outfit bearing Hungary-Anjou arms as his own, as this was the undeniable right of the winner according to the knightly custom in medieval Europe. Thomas Robson's "*British Herald*" fully reminds us this<sup>16</sup>. It is true, the practice was also to capture the defeated, as the victor was entitled to wear his insignia only until the loser was ransomed by his kin. But if he would never being ransomed, but ran instead, abandoning his knightly symbols? It would not being rightful for the winner to bear for good that splendid manufactured arms as reminder of perpetual blame for the king's cowardice?

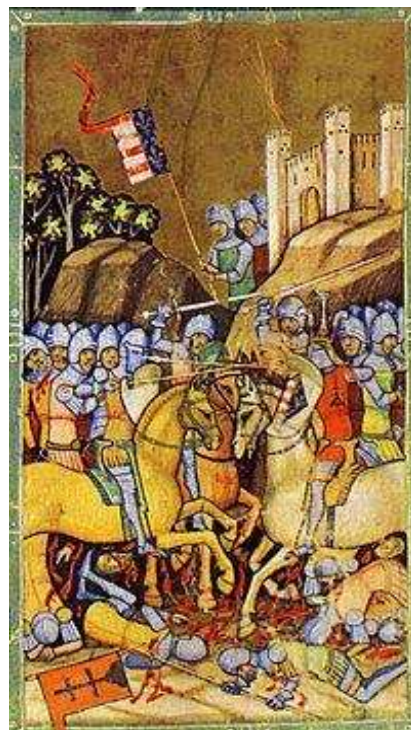


*The Angevin shield and probable alteration of the battle trophy*

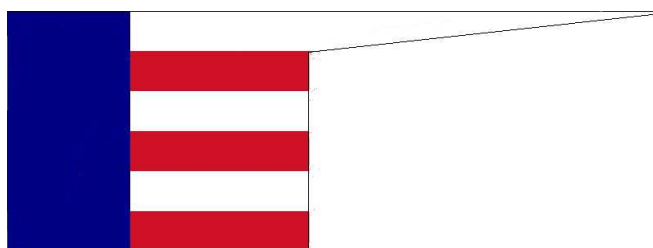
<sup>15</sup> Tudor-Radu Tiron, *At the border of two worlds. Hungarian and Polish Influences upon the Wallachian and Moldavian Mediaeval Heraldry (fourteenth-sixteenth centuries) in Genealogica & Heraldica. Proceedings of the XXXth International Congress of Genealogical and Heraldic Sciences, held at Maastricht, 24-28 September 2012, s'Gravenhage, Stichting De Nederlandse Leeuw, 2014.* underlines at pg.346: "Seeing the disaster of his army, the monarch changed his blazoned armor with one of his magnates, who lost his life in order to insure the retreat of his sovereign (Rex autem mutauerat armorum suorum insignia quibus induerat Deseu filium Dyonisii, quem putantes esse regem crudeliter occiderunt)".

<sup>16</sup> Thomas Robson, *The British Herald*, vol. III, Harvard College Library, 1917, page X: „In the days of chivalry, it was considered lawful that the victor, upon making captive any gentleman or warrior of higher degree, might assume and bear the shield of arms of his prisoner, enjoying it till regained by the vanquished; and the acquiring of coat armor by such feats of valor was considered more honorable than hereditary bearings, which descend alike to the cowardly and the brave.”

Proud and defiant, prince Basarab I did not intend at all to step into king Charles Robert's shoes. Small changes were to be made to the blazoned artifacts, especially considering a combat buckler hardly hit and scratched by adverse weapons and a torn royal battle-flag. For example, if the field with red stripes would be refurbished because it coincidentally reminded the own Basarab coat of arms, the golden lilies of Anjou would be removed or covered, leaving only the *azure*, which was the same with an equal familiar tincture, *the heraldic blue of the Balkan title of despot*. The final result was a slightly altered Anjou-Hungary arms, who meet the conviction expressed long ago by Romanian numismatist Octavian Iliescu supported by heraldist Dan Cernovodeanu<sup>17</sup> about the existence at the Prince's Court of Argeş of a coat of arms looking close to the Angevin one. (beside: king Charles Robert's battle-flag painted in „*Chronicum Pictum Vindobonenses*”, on Wikipedia)



If the battle-flag spotted by crusaders during their clashes with Radu I and his heavy cavalry was the one lost by Charles Robert in that 4 day's battle from 1330, as we presume, that relic banner carried a special symbolism for Wallachian forces, as did for other nations in Europe the St. George's flag, the Oriflamme, or the Dannebrog. For Wallachia, the old Anjou-Hungary banner was the proof of state sovereignty, reminding the decisive victory against the former suzerain, and it was an element of utmost importance for boosting in battle the troop's moral for several generations.



*The supposed battle-flag with dexter lance of Radu I spotted by crusaders in 1377, very likely a piece from the Angevin trophy captured by Basarab in 1330*

<sup>17</sup> Dan Cernovodeanu, *Știința și arta heraldică în România (Heraldic science and art in Romania)*, Scientific and Encyclopedic Publishing House, Bucharest, pg.67.



As we saw, Radu I did not use the praised banner as personal coat of arms. He resorted for this to the old Basarab arms, sometimes with a personal cadency, being it the **Θ** (theta) monogram or other logo, as shown on his type I deniers. But in the battle heat, this was the only knightly insignia remarked by his opponents and subsequently the only one who was advertised in the Western heraldic world through the Gelre herald's care.

In conclusion, my opinion is that Radu I double encounter with Western crusaders, if not Claes Heinenszoon himself, raised his European awareness and shaped his image as valiant knight, armiger and Balkan imperial glorious scion, *Scoonavaer*. After all his political and military deeds, he ended to style himself, including on some ducats minted during his reign, not just voivode, but *Io Radu, great voivode*. Unfortunately, on his accession he was already aged, closer to the end than the beginning of life. If he had a longer reign, due to his military prowess, administrative performance and political relevance in this part of the world, the one who was called by Italian chroniclers *Radano, prinzipe di Bulgaria, infidele*<sup>18</sup>, and by a German one *Pancraz der Weise*<sup>19</sup>, would have been certainly known in Romanian historiography as Radu the Great. This cognomen was attributed finally to one of his homonym grand-grandson from the sixteenth century. However, largely due to the error made by the monks drafting the Tismana monastery Commemorative list, Radu I was called sometimes Radu Negru (the Black), being confused without historical arguments with Thocomerius Negru voivode, the legendary founder of the Wallachian state. Even this confusion shows the huge prestige enjoyed by *Radu the Wise* in his country, decisively marking its history, although he ruled just about a decade.



<sup>18</sup> In *Cronaca Carrarese* by Galeazzo and Bartolomeo Gattari. Apparently, *Radu, prince of Bulgaria, unfaithful*, kept Vladislav I preeminence over the Badin Tsardom, being known also for his Orthodox faith who made him unfaithful in the Catholic Europe's eyes.

<sup>19</sup> *Pancraz the Wise*, named like this in the Eberhard Windeck chronicle *Book of Emperor Sigismund*, written 1430-39. The name derives from Radu's position as Ban of Severin (Ban Rad = Pancraz), and the honorable epithet *the Wise* attests his European prestige. The same chronic, showing a predilection for merging titles and names, mentions Mircea voivode as *Merzeweidan*.